

**TEMPLATE LETTER FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO SEND OUT TO PARENTS
IN REPLY TO THOSE RECEIVED BY SCHOOLS USING THE TEMPLATE PUT
FORWARD BY CAMPAIGNERS**

**DRAFT LETTER FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND WELSH GOVERNMENT TO
GO OUT VIA SCHOOLS**

Dear _____,

**Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the new Curriculum for
Wales**

We are writing to you in response to your questions about RSE. This letter seeks to address the concerns you have raised about Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) and provides factual information about this element of the curriculum. The rollout of the Curriculum for Wales framework commenced this September 2022. Within this, headteachers and governing bodies are under a legal duty to include mandatory Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in their curriculum. The mandatory requirements are set out in the RSE Code, meaning schools must follow it and this is supported by statutory guidance. The RSE Code and guidance can be found here: [Cross-cutting themes for designing your curriculum – Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#). We would strongly encourage you to read the Code and guidance for yourself to see what you can expect your child to learn and to see that many of the claims being made about RSE in Wales are wrong.

RSE is intended to help children to develop healthy relationships and behaviours with their friends and families, based on kindness, empathy and respect. This is important for them to develop as 'healthy, confident individuals' with positive social, emotional and mental well-being.

RSE is also intended to keep children safe and to protect their well-being. This is critical as technology and society continue to change rapidly. RSE helps children recognise relationships and situations that might put them at risk of harm. It can support all children with what they need to know and what to do to keep safe and how to seek help.

In law, schools and settings must provide pluralistic information about RSE. This means that they must teach children that there are a range of different views on different issues. They must make sure different views are presented and discussed in a critical way and they cannot teach these matters in a way that is biased. That also applies not just to the content of RSE but also the way it is taught.

The Curriculum for Wales requirements were the subject of extensive consultation, and the RSE Code and accompanying statutory guidance were subject to public consultation respondents raised a diverse range of views and perspectives. The summary of the consultation responses was published in November 2021. Since

2018, RSE has been through full and wide-ranging consultation and through the scrutiny process in the Senedd.

The RSE Code and statutory guidance were developed with teachers, working with organisations who champion children and women's rights, including: the office of the Children's Commissioner in Wales; NSPCC and Welsh Women's Aid.

I will now turn to specific points raised in your letter:

Legal arguments about your right as a parent to educate your child

In your letter, you say that the state should educate your child "in conformity" with your own religious and philosophical convictions. These are arguments that form the basis of an on-going judicial review in the High Court. The Welsh Government have publicly stated they will defend that challenge and they consider the RSE provisions to be lawful. In light of that, it would not be appropriate for the school or Local Authority to comment on that case.

The statutory guidance on RSE, which all schools must consider, emphasises the importance of engaging with parents and carers: recognising the critical role parents and carers play in this sensitive aspect of the curriculum. However, schools are legally required to develop and adopt a curriculum and teach according to the Code.

If your child is in secondary school and learning under the National Curriculum, you continue to have the right to withdraw your child from sex education. However, this right only applies to sex education, not to education about relationships. The right to withdraw does not apply to any learning related to this matter which is within the national curriculum programme of study for Science.

If you have specific issues with the RSE Code and believe that it conflicts with your legal rights, then I would advise you to write to the Welsh Ministers to raise the matter.

Developmental Appropriateness

In points 1, 2 and 4 of your letter, you ask about developmental appropriateness. We will deal with these issues together. Schools are legally required to ensure that learning is developmentally appropriate for every learner – in practice, that means learners must not be exposed to learning they're not ready for. In making decisions about what is developmentally appropriate, schools must use the RSE Code to consider the broad age ranges of when learning is likely to be appropriate. The ages set out within the Code indicate broadly when practitioners should *start* to consider whether learning in a phase is developmentally appropriate for their learners. This means that the Code gives a minimum age for when children should be taught specific learning, but it gives teachers freedom to teach it later, depending on the specific children.

Schools must also consider a range of factors to make judgments about whether learning is developmentally appropriate for specific children. This means schools are

legally required to take account of a range of factors including the learner's age; knowledge and maturity; any additional learning needs and their physiological and emotional development. If at any point you are concerned that something proposed or taught isn't developmentally appropriate, then you should raise your concerns with the school straight away.

The Code recognises that different children of the same age will be at different points in their development and allows schools to tailor their approach to ensure all learners receive the learning appropriate to them. Schools will have strategies for achieving this and this is something you may wish to discuss further with your school.

As was the case in the Foundation Phase, our youngest learners will be taught about friendships and families, they will absolutely not be taught about romantic or sexual relationships: this is prohibited by the RSE Code. The law is crystal clear: teaching of RSE must be developmentally appropriate for each and every child.

Schools and practitioners receive a programme of professional learning and development that includes RSE.

Lesson content

You have asked to see the lesson content of RSE. You should expect your school to share a summary of the adopted curriculum, including RSE. As stated, the curriculum will be required to teach the RSE Code and you can read this online to get a better sense of what RSE will include.

Over time, your school will also be able to provide examples of lesson plans and resources to support the delivery of the adopted curriculum. The new curriculum has been rolled out from this September so your school may not yet have detailed lesson plans for its adopted RSE curriculum prepared at this stage, particularly if they are intending to teach it later in the year. Schools are at the start of their new RSE curriculum journey and are encouraged to take their time to build their RSE curriculum sensitively and constructively so that RSE is embedded effectively for the long term. This will include making sure lesson plans are developmentally appropriate for their learners.

Welsh Government RSE statutory guidance, which all schools are legally required to consider, emphasises the importance of schools engaging with parents about RSE. Schools are encouraged to communicate proactively with parents and carers on an ongoing basis. We ask that parents engage schools respectfully and consider carefully what schools are proposing to teach. In turn, if you have particular concerns about specific aspects of a school's proposals, then you should raise these concerns with the school straight away.

We are confident that as schools develop and share their proposals for RSE and have open and respectful conversations with parents, this will help dispel any concerns that you may have.

Supported by school improvement services, schools will use resources that are reputable and developmentally appropriate, and they will use these in a way that is sensitive to children's needs. In advance of resources being used in the classroom, we will ask schools to share examples of these with parents.

Misinformation about RSE

We also want to make you aware that there are a lot of claims being made at the moment about RSE in the new Curriculum for Wales that are factually incorrect. A number of these claims are made by a particular group who believe that RSE in Wales is part of a co-ordinated "global rollout" of "comprehensive sexuality education" which they claim is intended to sexualise children. The Welsh Government have publicly stated that it strongly refutes this allegation which it says are baseless and damaging. None of the dangerous resources this group have cited have been used in Wales and the Welsh Government have been clear that they would not be permitted under the Code. I would encourage you to read [this statement](#) by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language. The Welsh Government has also published materials to help parents and carers understand the changes to RSE and you can find these here: [Repository - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

I hope this clarifies the position with regard to RSE.

Yours sincerely

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) – Frequently asked questions for schools and settings

What is RSE?

We want education to help our children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready for the next chapter in their life after school.

The Curriculum for Wales will begin to be rolled out in schools from September 2022. It has a key role to play in helping children and young people navigate the world safely.

‘Sex and Relationships Education’ (SRE) will change to ‘Relationships and Sexuality Education’ (RSE) in the new curriculum. The change of title is deliberate – with a renewed focus on Relationships.

Parents have a central role to play in supporting their children. There is also a crucial role for schools - especially in a world where there is so much inaccurate and misleading information and harmful materials, circulating online. RSE plays an important role for the safeguarding and protection of all learners in Wales.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) will be a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales – so that every child has a right to access the full curriculum. It includes learning on anti bullying, violence against woman and online safety as part of a whole school approach.

What will Primary school age children be taught?

The aim is to gradually build learners knowledge, skills and values as they develop emphasising the social and emotional aspects of relationships. Schools are legally required to ensure that learning is developmentally appropriate for every learner. That means they must not be exposed to learning they're not ready for.

Education about relationships in early development is required to focus on building healthy relationships and self-esteem by encouraging learners to value themselves; recognise and communicate their feelings and form friendships.

For example, at age 5, children currently in the Foundation Phase learn about relationships with parents, family and friends - not romantic relationships. This will be mirrored in the new curriculum.

Up until the end of primary school children will learn:

- Developing empathy and kindness through positive interactions.
- Promoting awareness that there are different types of families and relationships – and everyone is unique.
- Learning how human beings change as they grow.
- Recognising the importance of looking after yourself and personal hygiene.

- Learning the right words for all body parts.
- Knowing the benefits of asking for help and who to ask for help.
- Realising that everyone has a right to privacy and to understand the general idea of consent in everyday dealings with others.
- Being able to interact with others in a way that is fair and respectful to all.

By the end of primary school, in line with what happens currently, we would expect most learners to have learned about reproduction. We expect schools to handle this very sensitively and only when learners are ready.

Is the Welsh Government continuing to roll out mandatory RSE?

Yes, the Welsh Government will continue with the roll out of RSE.

RSE has a positive and empowering role in learners' education and plays a vital role in supporting them to be healthy and confident individuals.

Changes to technology and society mean that now more than ever learners need help and protection. RSE is about keeping children and young people healthy and safe: supporting them to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that will assist in protecting them throughout their lives and improve their well-being.

RSE helps:

- learners to become healthy, confident individuals who form positive relationships based on mutual trust and respect and are building their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy;
- schools respond to a wide range of issues children face; and
- ensure learners have access to a wide range of support and advice.

How do I know what my school will be teaching in RSE?

It is a legislative requirement that RSE must be developmentally appropriate for learners and this includes all materials and resources and manner of teaching. RSE is also legally required to be objective, critical and pluralistic: meaning schools and settings must provide factual information and on questions of values, a range of views on a given subject, commonly held within society.

The RSE Code sets out learning at developmentally appropriate phases. It has been published to give parents and carers clarity and transparency about what their children will learn and when. This helps parents and carers see exactly what schools are required by law to include in RSE. You can access it here: [Cross-cutting themes for designing your curriculum - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

What happens if a parent does not think the RSE offer complies with the Code? If they feel it is not done in a developmentally appropriate or sensitive way?

The Curriculum for Wales guidance is clear that when a school designs its curriculum, it should involve learners, parents, carers, partner agencies and the local

community. This is an important means of ensuring the curriculum meets learners' needs and is authentic to their context within the national framework.

Communicating effectively with parents and carers on an ongoing basis is an important way to foster positive relationships in order to engage them in purposeful and meaningful dialogue. When undertaken well, this can help aid learner progression by helping parents and carers to understand how they can support learning within and outside the school environment. Schools' curricula should also recognise and reflect the needs and contexts of the communities within and beyond the school.

If parents have any concerns, then they should discuss this with the school and head teacher in the first instance. If they remain unhappy, they can raise the matter with the school's governing body.

Schools are required to have in place a complaints process pursuant to section 29 of the Education Act 2002 for dealing with complaints relating to the school.

If the parent still remains unhappy, parents can raise the matter with the local authority.

After exhausting the local complaints process then a complaint can be made to the Welsh Ministers under Part 2 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (SSO Act). A complaint may be made if the complainant believes the prescribed ground for intervention are made out. Such matters are very fact dependent, but it is likely that the most relevant ground will be GROUND 6: the governing body or head teacher has acted, or is proposing to act, unreasonably in the exercise of any of its or his or her functions under the Education Acts.

The Welsh Ministers have their powers of direction under the SSO Act in respect of head teachers and governing bodies in the event they conclude the grounds (section 17 of the SSO Act) for intervention have been made out, there are a number of courses of action available. These are set out in Part 2 of the SSO Act. For example, the Welsh Ministers can potentially issue a direction to revise the RSE Code so that it is compliant with the requirements of the 2021 Act.

However, the expectation is that the local authority will take action in the first instance. They have similar powers of direction and it is only if they fail to take action, or fail to take effective action, that the Welsh Ministers would intervene.

The Welsh Ministers also have powers to intervene in local authorities if they are acting or propose to act unlawfully so that 1 or more of the powers of intervention are made out (section 21 of the SSO Act).

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from an RSE lesson, what should I do?

The 2021 Act requires that RSE must be developmentally appropriate for individual learners. This means that schools and settings must design a curriculum for its setting but must then go on to consider the needs of the individual learners. This also

extends to resources and provision by external providers. The RSE Code has been set out in three broad developmental phases to reflect this legal requirement.

The RSE statutory guidance is clear that schools and settings should have clear lines of communication in relation to RSE and should engage with learners, parents, carers and the wider community, offering them the opportunity to engage with learning and teaching in RSE.

The RSE Code and statutory guidance have been developed to accommodate a wide range of views, values and beliefs. Ensuring understanding about these different views is explicitly stated in both. Welsh Government has worked very closely with a range of community and faith organisations in developing this and it is hoped the Code and statutory guidance, properly understood, would not give parents and carers cause to withdraw their children.

Where significant concerns are raised, it will help to understand where these concerns have arisen from.

These may well be down to misunderstandings about what the Code and statutory guidance requires. Schools should share a link to the Code and statutory guidance as well as the leaflet and assets provided in the Hwb link below so that parents/carers can see exactly what is proposed for RSE in Wales.

Parents/carers may well have seen examples of highly inappropriate resources and be worried that these may be used in your school. You may want to help reassure parents/carers by showing them what resources you are using and to explain that inappropriate resources have no place.

Parents/carers may worry about the impact RSE will have on their children. Schools and settings can help parents and carers understand why RSE is so important and the role it can play in keeping their children well and safe. They may feel that their children aren't developmentally ready for specific learning. You may want to explain the schools' duty to ensure learning is developmentally appropriate and further explore whether their child is ready for specific learning.

Useful resources & information

[Relationships and sexuality education playlist - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

[A new curriculum in Wales: a guide for parents - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Cross-cutting themes for designing your curriculum - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

(Link to the [RSE Code and the statutory guidance](#))

To find out more contact: CurriculumforWales@gov.wales

Relationships and Sexuality Education

We want education to help our children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready for the next chapter in their life after school.

The Curriculum for Wales will begin to be rolled out in schools from September 2022. It has a key role to play in helping children and young people navigate the world safely.

'Sex and Relationships Education' (SRE) will change to 'Relationships and Sexuality Education' (RSE) in the new curriculum. The change of title is deliberate – with a renewed focus on Relationships.

Parents have a central role to play in supporting their children. There is also a crucial role for schools - especially in a world where there is so much incorrect and misleading information and harmful materials, circulating online. RSE plays an important role for the safeguarding and protection of all learners in Wales.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) will be a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales – so that every child has a right to access the full curriculum. It will also be part of a whole school approach including anti bullying, and learning about violence against woman and online safety. The [RSE Code](#) has been published to give parents and carers clarity and transparency about what their children will learn and when.

Incorrect and misleading information

There has been lobbying against the introduction of mandatory RSE in schools.

This includes claims that RSE is a “Global Sexual Education conspiracy”. It is claimed this ideology promotes sexual rights from birth and mandatory sex education from age 3. We want to ensure that people have access to factual information. Many of these claims are incorrect and confusing.

The lobbying around RSE includes the allegation that numerous RSE resources “promote” sexual activities. Many of the resources targeted have been developed to support conversations around LGBTQ+ issues.

These are examples of some of the claims.

“Biology, Safeguarding and Sex are three different subjects, one of which has been removed from the mandatory element of the Curriculum Bill (Science)”.

Incorrect. Science will be mandatory as outlined in the [‘Statements of What Matters Code’](#), part of the new curriculum framework.

There has been a conspiracy to silence opponents and plans have been developed behind closed doors. “Parental opt out was removed between publication of RSE Draft 2019 and publication of Curriculum Bill 2020, the Government has not been transparent with the public.”

Incorrect. The proposals have been consulted on extensively and the RSE draft Code was subject to public consultation. The Code has been developed by practitioners and based on research and evidence. The Code and statutory guidance was published in January 2022 after the Senedd passed the RSE Code in December 2021.

In January 2019, the Welsh Government published its [‘Our National Mission: A Transformational Curriculum’](#) consultation which included proposals for legislation to underpin the new curriculum, including making RE and RSE statutory requirements. It also sought views on the issue of the ‘Right to Withdrawal’.

[Draft guidance on relationships and sexuality education](#) was published for consultation in February 2019. The [summary of the consultation responses](#) was published in July 2019.

[Relationships and Sexuality Education \(RSE\) Code and Statutory guidance](#) was published for consultation in May 2021. The summary of the [consultation responses](#) was published in November 2021.

“There is a Global Sexual Education campaign, and RSE proposals in Wales is based on WHO and UNESCO documents which promote children’s rights above parents, doesn’t safeguard children, porn, arranged marriage.”

Incorrect. There is no such campaign.

Neither the RSE Code nor the statutory guidance seeks to “promote” those matters. It does not seek to indoctrinate learners to any philosophies, lifestyles or harmful activities. They seek to provide neutral information aimed at safeguarding children. The RSE guidance does state that high-quality, holistic and inclusive RSE is associated with a range of positive and protective outcomes for all learners and their communities and can promote equality and equity of sex, gender and sexuality.

For example, the UNESCO Technical Guidance to Sexuality clearly states “Child early and forced marriage/cohabitation violates fundamental human rights”. This guidance was referred to during the development of the Code but is not based on it.

The 2021 Act also requires that RSE be suitable to the learners stage of development. RSE is also legally required to be objective, critical and pluralistic: meaning schools and settings must provide factual information and on questions of values, a range of views on a given subject, commonly held within society.

“5000 civil servants work on the policy”.

False. This would be equivalent to 91% of Welsh Government employees.

[What will primary children be taught?](#)

The aim is to gradually build learners knowledge, skills and values as they develop emphasising the social and emotional aspects of relationships.

Education about relationships in early development should focus on the building of self-esteem by encouraging learners to value themselves; recognise and communicate their feelings and form friendships.

For example, at age 5, children currently in the Foundation Phase learn about relationships with parents, family and friends - not romantic relationships. This will be mirrored in the new curriculum. The concept of general 'consent' will be introduced in early development and the learning is outlined in the RSE Code – 'an awareness of the need to seek agreement in order to share, for example toys. An awareness of everyone's right to privacy, personal boundaries'.

Up until the end of primary school children will learn about the following as set out in the RSE Code:

- Developing empathy and kindness through positive interactions.
- Promoting awareness that there are different types of families and relationships – and everyone is unique.
- Learning how human beings change as they grow.
- Recognising the importance of looking after yourself and personal hygiene.
- Learning the right words for all body parts.
- Knowing the benefits of asking for help and who to ask for help.
- Realising that everyone has a right to privacy and to understand the general idea of consent in everyday dealings with others.
- Being able to interact with others in a way that is fair and respectful to all.

How to combat incorrect and misleading information

Here are some useful tips when dealing with conspiracy theories or combating incorrect and misleading information.

- Never reply to a tweet or comment containing incorrect or misleading information (even to debunk it), if you have to – reply privately encouraging them to delete it.
- Never quote tweet or share incorrect or misleading information (even to debunk it), if you have to – screenshot the post and clearly label it as false
- Instead of debunking facts, share a counter narrative – for example – “RSE plays an important role for the safeguarding and protection of all learners in Wales. Here's what's being taught in *(insert name of school or local authority area)”.
- Generate and share positive messaging and examples in targeted online spaces.
- Follow @WG_Education and share factually accurate content about RSE.

What's the view of the key organisations safeguarding children?

- The Children's Commissioner for Wales “strongly supports” our RSE proposals, stating that it will “give children and young people the understanding they need to make safe, informed choices.”
- The NSPCC have described the new curriculum as a “game-changer” in helping to keep children safe.

- NSPCC also campaigned for the removal of the parental ‘Right to withdrawal’ because they believe all children should have access to information which keeps them safe. See their response to the consultation in 2019: [nspcc-cymru-wales-relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidance-2018-response-mar2019.pdf](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidance-2018-response-mar-2019/)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) say all children and young people have the right to receive high quality, holistic and inclusive education about relationships and sexuality.

How have Welsh Government developed the proposals?

The RSE Code was published in January 2022 outlining what learners will be taught at different developmentally appropriate phases. It has been published to give parents and carers clarity and transparency about what their children will learn and when.

LINK - [Cross-cutting themes for designing your curriculum - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-10/consultation-document-ensuring-access-to-the-full-curriculum_0.pdf)

- The Welsh Government was clear when the consultation on RSE was announced in 2019 that they were minded to make the curriculum mandatory for all learners.
- There was also a consultation on ‘full access to the curriculum’ later in 2019. (https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-10/consultation-document-ensuring-access-to-the-full-curriculum_0.pdf)
- The RSE statutory guidance is clear that schools and settings should have clear lines of communication in relation to RSE and should engage with learners, parents, carers and the wider community, offering them the opportunity to engage with learning and teaching in RSE.
- Governing bodies have a key role, along with head teachers, in determining and monitoring the school’s RSE programme, including reviewing it annually and engaging with parents / carers.

What are the implications of the Judicial Review on the Curriculum for Wales roll out in September 2022?

In June 2022, the High Court granted permission for a legal challenge by way of judicial review in relation to the new Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 (“the 2021 Act”). The claimants are parents of five school age children. The Welsh Ministers will defend the claim.

The phased roll out of the new curriculum will commence as planned on 1 September 2022 and will complete in 2026. That means there will be no parental right of withdrawal in the new curriculum from 1 September 2022. There will continue to be a right of withdrawal for those school years who have not transitioned to the new curriculum and so continue with the previous curriculum.

Useful resources & information

You can use the following information to share with people online.

[Relationships and sexuality education playlist - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

[A new curriculum in Wales: a guide for parents - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Cross-cutting themes for designing your curriculum - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

To find out more contact dysg@gov.wales

Useful research, facts and figures relating to children and online harms

Issue - Pornography – in a report undertaken by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) in 2019 found that:

- more than half (51%) of 11 to 13 year olds reported that they had seen pornography at some point, rising to 66% of 14-15 year olds.
- Three quarters (75%) of parents felt that their child would not have seen pornography online. But of their children, more than half (53%) said they had in fact seen it.

<https://www.bbfc.co.uk/about-us/news/children-see-pornography-as-young-as-seven-new-report-finds>

Issue - Online relationships

- Almost 9 in 10 children aged 10 to 15 years said they went online every day.
- Around 1 in 6 children aged 10 to 15 years spoke with someone they had never met before (equivalent to 682,000 children) in the previous 12 months.
- An estimated 1 in 50 children said that they spoke to or messaged someone online in the previous 12 months who they thought was their age but later found out were much older.
- An estimated 5% of children aged 10 to 15 years met up in person with someone they had only spoken to online (equivalent to 212,000 children) in the previous 12 months.
- Around 1 in 10 children aged 13 to 15 years reported receiving a sexual message, while 1 in 100 reported sending a sexual message, in the previous 12 months.
- Girls aged 13 to 15 years were significantly more likely to report receiving sexual messages than boys (16% compared with 6%) in the previous 12 months.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/childrenonlinebehaviourinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020>

<https://www.crimesurvey.co.uk/en/HomeReadMore.html>

Issue - Online sexual harassment

From research undertaken as part of Project deShame with 13-17 year olds. The research was done in Denmark, Hungary and the UK, but these numbers are from the UK results.

- 10% of teens have received sexual threats online (for example rape threats) in the last year.
- 29% of teens have witnessed people their age making sexual threats online.
- 26% of young people have had rumours about their sexual behaviour shared online in the past year. 66% have witnessed this.
- 23% of teens have received unwanted sexual messages and images in the past year, with this more likely to happen to girls (31%) than boys (11%).

These are all forms of online sexual harassment, something that Childnet have defined as ‘unwanted sexual conduct on any digital platform’ that is happening between young people. It can make a young person feel threatened, exploited, coerced, humiliated, upset, sexualised or discriminated against.

<https://hwb.gov.wales/repository/resource/e5216547-4325-4f05-b820-e65a248bc6c5/en>

<https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame/research>

Issue - Self-generated imagery / online sexual abuse

- The IWF, the UK charity responsible for finding and removing images and videos of child sexual abuse from the internet and our UK Safer Internet Centre partners, has seen a dramatic 77% increase in the amount of “self-generated” abuse material as more children and young people, spend longer online in 2020.
- Responding to a record number of reports of online child sexual abuse in 2020, IWF analysts tagged 68,000 reports as including “self-generated” child sexual abuse content, which was a 77% increase on 2019’s total of 38,400 reports.

[IWF 2020 Annual Report | Face the facts | Internet Watch Foundation](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/healthy-relationships/)

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/sex-relationships/healthy-relationships/>

Template replies to questions outlined in the document ‘Approaching the school: Teacher Questions’ (from the campaigners’ website) (document to accompany the template letter so that local authorities and schools can customise as necessary)

Question numbers refer to the numbers used in the PCP document.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

You have asked how will neurodiverse children or children with ALN be taught about RSE.

The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 expressly requires schools when implementing the curriculum, including the RSE component, to take account of the additional learning needs of the individual pupil. This is not a one fits all approach and so RSE must be developmentally appropriate for each and every pupil.

The Act further provides that the RSE curriculum must be developmentally appropriate for individual children. Further guidance on what is developmentally appropriate is provided in the RSE guidance which schools are legally required to consider. In setting their RSE curriculum they must also comply with the Code. This recognises that they may need topics introduced at a different time and that the way learning is taught might need to be altered. The statutory guidance for RSE is clear that *all staff, including ancillary staff, physiotherapists, nurses and carers should be aware of the school’s approach to RSE when working with learners with additional learning needs.*

The way the RSE Code is structured means that schools have the flexibility to tailor or delay learning about RSE topics to ensure that it is developmentally appropriate for specific children.

The allegation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (related to questions below)

1. *Are you and your staff happy and comfortable with teaching RSE/CSE from age 3?*
13. *Are you aware the Welsh Government has adopted the framework and resources from Comprehensive Sexuality Education?*
14. *Do you know UNESCO is a global comprehensive Sexuality Education?*
15. *Do you know who writes this global comprehensive sexuality education?*
16. *Have you heard of SEICUS?*
17. *Are you aware the Kinsey institute are Chief advisors to UNESCO?*

Reply

There have been suggestions that this is part of a global agenda to sexualise children. That is absolutely wrong; it in no way reflects the RSE Code and would not be permitted by law in any circumstances. The RSE Code and statutory guidance

were drafted by practicing teachers in collaboration with Welsh Government. These teachers represented a wide range of expertise, experience and views, including schools of a religious character. As such, the RSE Code and statutory guidance were developed by teachers for teachers in Wales.

Since 2018, RSE has been through full and wide-ranging consultation. The RSE Code and accompanying statutory guidance were subject to extensive public consultation and were confirmed by the Senedd in December 2021.

The Welsh Government is clear that it has not adopted anything called “Comprehensive Sexuality Education” and is not part of any global initiative. Welsh Government has not worked with any international organisation in developing the RSE Code and statutory guidance and it has not worked with the organisations that you’ve referenced.

Sexual Safeguarding

3. *Can you outline the training for sexual safeguarding? Does this training include institutional sex abuse?*
4. *What is the process for dealing with disclosures of abuse?*
5. *What provisions outside of the DBS are in place for vetting of school staff?*
6. *Will counselling be available for children & staff dealing with sexual abuse?*

Reply

All schools and local authorities take matters of safeguarding and abuse extremely seriously. Local authorities, school governing bodies and head teachers have a duty to exercise their educational functions to promote the welfare of pupils. Schools stand in loco parentis whilst they have charge of pupils. That means they must take such care of their child as a responsible parent would.

RSE in the new curriculum plays a key role in keeping children safe and so is an important tool in safeguarding children.

Training

2. *Can you explain what training will be given to address sexual & reproductive health?*
8. *What are YOUR qualifications?*

Reply

In conjunction with the schools improvement services our schools and their staff are undertaking professional learning for designing and delivering the RSE curriculum which is in line with the learning set out in the mandatory RSE Code. The Welsh Government is investing a further £500,000 during 22/23 and this includes co-developing specific support for schools to deliver RSE.

All teachers have the appropriate qualifications and ongoing professional development.

7. Will you be using outside agencies? If yes, who?

I refer you to the subtitle in our response on 'Lesson Content' which relates to the design of the curriculum and decisions taken at school level in terms of the delivery of RSE.

Legislative questions

9. Have you read the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021? Do you agree with the removal of parents' rights?

11. Will you be enforcing the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act?

Reply

These are questions related to the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 and also relate to the on-going judicial review. They are for the Welsh Ministers to answer, and it would not be appropriate for us to comment. Schools remain under a legal duty to deliver RSE.

Whole school approach

10. Are you comfortable teaching RSE & the whole school approach?

Reply

The Welsh Government guidance encourages schools to teach RSE through different lessons. This might include looking at different types of relationships in literature; women's rights through history or learning about keeping safe online. The guidance is clear that this should only be done when it's authentic: it absolutely doesn't mean every lesson will include learning about RSE. (One claim is that learners will be encouraged to measure the dimensions of a pride flag in maths – this isn't authentic and so we wouldn't expect schools to do this).

The whole-school approach is about embedding learning in RSE in some aspects of the school environment. That will support learners and their well-being. This means ensuring that staff, wider school policy and the community should support the development of positive relationships. In practice this would include ensuring school assemblies, school councillors and nurses are able to help and making sure that the school environment helps children to be kind to each other.

Graphic Content

19. Have you seen the graphic lesson content coming from England & Scotland?

Reply

These resources have not been used in Wales. Welsh Government has said that they are not in keeping with the RSE Code and would not be lawful to use in Wales.

Schools must ensure learners are not exposed to learning that is not appropriate for their level of development. This includes considering their age and maturity. It also means that all resources and materials used in schools and settings must be developmentally appropriate to learners, and be part of an objective, pluralistic teaching approach. This is supported by the statutory guidance.

School Health Research Network (SHRN) - Student Health and Well-being Survey

20. Does the School Support the Health & Wellbeing Sex Survey Scotland? & the recent step towards it taken by the Welsh Government?

Reply

Learners in Wales do not, and will not, receive the Scottish Health and Well-being Census, as some mistaken claims suggest. The Student Health and Well-being Survey, which takes place every two years, is a robust national survey, providing high quality data on the health and well-being of around 120,000 young people aged 11–16 in Wales. It is undertaken as part of the School Health Research Network (SHRN) – a partnership between Cardiff University, the Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and Cancer Research UK. SHRN's advisory board includes several stakeholders, including the Children's Commissioner and Estyn.

The rationale for this work, in Wales and internationally over a number of years, is to provide high quality scientific evidence in order to inform policy and practice to improve the health and well-being of young people. The Welsh Government has placed the health and well-being of learners at the heart of the education system, through the new Curriculum for Wales and the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience, and also through the Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Well-being.

In order to respond proactively to existing and emerging health and well-being issues, it is crucial that we obtain robust evidence, directly from young people themselves, to inform and monitor policy and practice at national, local and school levels.

The survey follows a rigorous ethical protocol to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. Each wave of the survey receives ethics approval from Cardiff University. Both parents and students are asked for their consent. Parents are sent letters with details of the survey and the topics covered, how they can obtain further information or discuss any concerns with the study team, and instructions on how they can withdraw their child from the survey. Information for students makes it clear that taking part in the survey is entirely voluntary. The survey is completed online and is confidential. Every question in the student survey has a response option of 'I do not want to answer' so students can omit any question they do not feel comfortable

answering. Students are advised at the start and end of the survey to direct any concerns to teachers or pastoral staff.

Terminology

24. Are you aware the guidance & code has erased all terminology for biological sex?

Reply

The RSE Code does not ignore biological sex. The RSE Code explicitly requires schools to teach about biological sex. The accompanying statutory guidance, glossary and supporting materials, include explicit reference to biological sex and to women. Because the principles in the Code apply generally to both boys and girls, the Code doesn't refer to what different children of different sexes should learn. You will be interested to note that the Personal and Social education (PSE) framework published in 2008 which was the previous guidance for the sex education curriculum, made no reference to men, women, boys or girls at all. That guidance did not erase gender and nor does the new Code and guidance.

25. Do you have the research which backs up the early teaching of intimate body parts

This is about safeguarding. Learners need to be able to label areas of their body in order to understand appropriate and inappropriate touch. This is particularly important in ensuring that younger children can recognise abuse and situations where they are uncomfortable, in order to tell a trusted adult. There has been some misinformation that suggests this is about teaching young children about intimately touching themselves. That is categorically wrong and does not reflect the RSE Code. The RSE Code is to support children to recognise inappropriate touch should it occur.

Engagement with parents and carers

12. How will you deal with parents who oppose?

Reply

We very much encourage parents to engage positively and respectfully with schools. We expect schools to communicate with you about what your child will learn and when. If you have any concerns about specific things your child has or will learn, we encourage you to raise these with the school. The school will be able to explain what it is intending to teach and why, as well as how it will ensure that the learning is handled sensitively. We are confident that this should help address any concerns you have.

Because there is no legal right to withdraw from RSE, unauthorised absences should be treated in the usual way.

Position in Secondary schools for learners not under the new curriculum

Reply

If your child is learning under the National Curriculum, you continue to have the right to withdraw your child from sex education. However, this right only applies to sex education, not to education about relationships. The right to withdraw does not apply to any learning related to this matter which is within the national curriculum programme of study for Science.

Relationships and Sexuality Education – Frequently Asked Questions:

Handling instructions

We want to support local authorities and schools to respond to questions from the public as positively as possible, emphasising that RSE is taught in a factual, pluralistic and developmentally appropriate way. Questions often overlap or share similar answers and so we have batched them together into thematic sections. We would encourage you to provide answers that cover the broader principles involved, rather than respond to multiple/specific questions individually.

Below we have grouped sample questions into thematic areas to support you to answer questions on common concerns, helping you to formulate response to future questions that will fall under these headings. Sample questions have been drawn from real questions posed by campaign groups and community engagement events. This is not an exhaustive list but cover all common areas of enquiry.

Ongoing Judicial Review on RSE (this will be updated following the JR ruling):

Questions have been received where parents' state they should be able to educate their child "in conformity" with their own religious and philosophical convictions. These are arguments that form the basis of an on-going judicial review in the High Court. The Welsh Government have publicly stated they will defend that challenge and they consider the RSE provisions to be lawful. In light of that, it would not be appropriate for schools or Local Authorities to comment on that case.

Misinformation about RSE

We also want to make you aware that there are a lot of claims being made at the moment about RSE in the new Curriculum for Wales that are factually incorrect. A number of these claims are made by a particular group who believe that RSE in Wales is part of a co-ordinated "global rollout" of "comprehensive sexuality education" which they claim is intended to sexualise children. The Welsh Government have publicly stated that it strongly refutes this allegation which it says are baseless and damaging. None of the dangerous resources this group have cited have been used in Wales and the Welsh Government have been clear that they would not be permitted under the Code. I would encourage you to read [this statement](#) by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language. The Welsh Government has also published materials to help parents and carers understand the changes to RSE and you can find these here: [Repository - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

Age/developmentally appropriate provision

Sample Questions:

- Can you please define what is meant by 'age appropriate' in the context of RSE/CSE?
- Can you please define 'Developmentally appropriate' in the context of RSE/CSE?
- Have you provided schoolteachers with a certified assessment tool to help them ascertain which child is age and/or developmentally appropriate to receive RSE/CSE material? If yes, can you please provide the empirical research data that has validated the use of these assessment tools on children?
- Further to this question, have you provided schools with any analytic tool or scientific statement that defines 'age appropriate' and 'developmentally appropriate' for both neurotypical and neurodiverse children?
- Do you have any references to white papers or research data which supports early teaching of intimate body parts?

General Response:

Developmentally Appropriate

Schools are legally required to ensure that learning is developmentally appropriate for every learner – in practice, that means learners must not be exposed to learning they're not ready for. In making decisions about what is developmentally appropriate, schools must use the RSE Code to consider the broad age ranges of when learning is likely to be appropriate. The ages set out within the Code indicate broadly when practitioners should *start* to consider whether learning in a phase is developmentally appropriate for their learners. This means that the Code gives a minimum age for when children should be taught specific learning, but it gives teachers freedom to teach it later, depending on the specific children.

Schools must also consider a range of factors to make judgments about whether learning is developmentally appropriate for specific children. This means schools are legally required to take account of a range of factors including the learner's age; knowledge and maturity; any additional learning needs and their physiological and emotional development. If at any point you are concerned that something proposed or taught isn't developmentally appropriate, then you should raise your concerns with the school straight away.

The Code recognises that different children of the same age will be at different points in their development and allows schools to tailor their approach to ensure all learners

receive the learning appropriate to them. Schools will have strategies for achieving this and this is something you may wish to discuss further with your school.

As was the case in the Foundation Phase, our youngest learners will be taught about friendships and families, they will absolutely not be taught about romantic or sexual relationships: this is prohibited by the RSE Code. The law is crystal clear: teaching of RSE must be developmentally appropriate for each and every child.

Schools and practitioners receive a programme of professional learning and development that includes RSE.

Specific Issues:

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

The Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 expressly requires schools when implementing the curriculum, including the RSE component, to take account of the additional learning needs of the individual pupil. This is not a one size fits all approach and so RSE must be developmentally appropriate for each and every pupil.

The Act further provides that the RSE curriculum must be developmentally appropriate for individual children. Further guidance on what is developmentally appropriate is provided in the RSE guidance which schools are legally required to consider. In setting their RSE curriculum they must also comply with the Code. This recognises that they may need topics introduced at a different time and that the way learning is taught might need to be altered. The statutory guidance for RSE is clear that *all staff, including ancillary staff, physiotherapists, nurses and carers should be aware of the school's approach to RSE when working with learners with additional learning needs.*

The way the RSE Code is structured means that schools have the flexibility to tailor or delay learning about RSE topics to ensure that it is developmentally appropriate for specific children.

Body parts

This is about safeguarding. Learners need to be able to label areas of their body in order to understand appropriate and inappropriate touch. This is particularly important in ensuring that younger children can recognise abuse and situations where they are uncomfortable, in order to tell a trusted adult. There has been some misinformation that suggests this is about teaching young children about intimately touching themselves. That is categorically wrong and does not reflect the RSE Code. The RSE Code is to support children to recognise inappropriate touch should it occur.

Parental wishes

Sample Questions:

- How are schools meant to deal with parents who oppose this Act and what punitive measures will they face if they wish to exercise their primary right to opt-out as is afforded to them by the Education Act 1996, which states that all parents have a right to have their children educated according to their philosophical, religious and faith convictions?
- Are schools required to enforce the Curriculum & Assessment Act?

Specific Issues:

Speaking with parents

The Curriculum for Wales guidance is clear that when a school designs its curriculum, it should involve learners, parents, carers, partner agencies and the local community. This is an important means of ensuring the curriculum meets learners' needs and is authentic to their context within the national framework.

Communicating effectively with parents and carers on an ongoing basis is an important way to foster positive relationships. When undertaken well, this can help parents and carers to understand how they can support learning within and outside the school environment. Schools' curricula should also recognise and reflect the needs and contexts of the communities within and beyond the school.

If parents have any concerns, then they should discuss this with the school and head teacher in the first instance. If they remain unhappy, they can raise the matter with the school's governing body.

Complaints Procedures

We would always encourage schools and parents to talk about their concerns and work together to identify solutions. It may be, however, that parents will wish to engage with the formal complaints procedure if a local solution cannot be arrived at.

Schools are required to have in place a complaints process pursuant to section 29 of the Education Act 2002 for dealing with complaints relating to the school. If the parent still remains unhappy, parents can raise the matter with the local authority.

After exhausting the local complaints process then a complaint can be made to the Welsh Ministers under Part 2 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (SSO Act). A complaint may be made if the complainant believes the prescribed ground for intervention is made out. Such matters are very fact dependent, but it is likely that the most relevant ground will be GROUND 6: the governing body or head teacher has acted, or is proposing to act, unreasonably in the exercise of any of its or his or her functions under the Education Acts.

The Welsh Ministers have their powers of direction under the SSO Act in respect of head teachers and governing bodies in the event they conclude the grounds (section 17 of the SSO Act) for intervention have been made out, there are a number of courses of

action available. These are set out in Part 2 of the SSO Act. For example, the Welsh Ministers can potentially issue a direction to revise the RSE Code so that it is compliant with the requirements of the 2021 Act. However, the expectation is that the local authority will take action in the first instance. They have similar powers of direction, and it is only if they fail to take action, or fail to take effective action, that the Welsh Ministers would intervene.

The Welsh Ministers also have powers to intervene in local authorities if they are acting or propose to act unlawfully so that 1 or more of the powers of intervention are made out (section 21 of the SSO Act).

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from an RSE lesson under the Curriculum for Wales.

The 2021 Curriculum and Assessment Act requires that RSE must be developmentally appropriate for individual learners. This means that schools and settings must design a curriculum for its setting but must then go on to consider the needs of the individual learners. This also extends to resources and provision by external providers. The RSE Code has been set out in three broad developmental phases to reflect this legal requirement. The RSE statutory guidance is clear that schools and settings should have clear lines of communication in relation to RSE and should engage with learners, parents, carers and the wider community, offering them the opportunity to engage with learning and teaching in RSE.

The RSE Code and statutory guidance have been developed to accommodate a wide range of views, values and beliefs. Ensuring understanding about these different views is explicitly stated in both. Welsh Government has worked very closely with a range of community and faith organisations in developing this and it is hoped the Code and statutory guidance, properly understood, would not give parents and carers cause to withdraw their children. Where significant concerns are raised, it will help to understand where these concerns have arisen from. These may well be down to misunderstandings about what the Code and statutory guidance requires. Schools should share a link to the Code and statutory guidance as well as the leaflet and assets provided in the Hwb link below so that parents/carers can see exactly what is proposed for RSE in Wales.

Parents/carers may well have seen examples of highly inappropriate resources and be worried that these may be used in your school. You may want to help reassure parents/carers by showing them what resources you are using and to explain that inappropriate resources have no place. Parents/carers may worry about the impact RSE will have on their children. Schools and settings can help parents and carers understand why RSE is so important and the role it can play in keeping their children well and safe.

They may feel that their children aren't developmentally ready for specific learning. You may want to explain the schools' duty to ensure learning is developmentally appropriate and further explore whether their child is ready for specific learning.

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child from Sex Education under National Curriculum 2008 arrangements.

The parental right to withdraw their child from National Curriculum 2008 provision of Sex Education (currently Year 8-11 in those secondary schools that have adopted the Curriculum for Wales, Years 7-11 for those who have not) is still in operation.

Learners under the pre-existing curriculum

If a child is in secondary school and learning under the National Curriculum, parents continue to have the right to withdraw your child from sex education. However, this right only applies to sex education, not to education about relationships. The right to withdraw does not apply to any learning related to this matter which is within the national curriculum programme of study for Science.

If you have specific issues with the RSE Code and believe that it conflicts with your legal rights, then I would advise you to write to the Welsh Ministers to raise the matter.

Legal arguments about rights of parents to educate their child

The statutory guidance on RSE, which all schools must consider, emphasises the importance of engaging with parents and carers: recognising the critical role parents and carers play in this sensitive aspect of the curriculum. However, schools are legally required to develop and adopt a curriculum and teach according to the Code.

Gender Identity/trans issues

- Can you please clarify why the guidance & code has erased all terminology relating to biological sex?
- Will suspected gender dysphoria cases as identified by schoolteachers be placed on a medical referral pathway within an NHS framework?
- Are suspected gender dysphoria cases as identified by schoolteachers required to see qualified Clinical Psychologists and/or Psychiatrists before a formal diagnosis is made?
- When a teacher identifies a child as potentially struggling with suspected gender dysphoria, what guidance, training and qualifications are teachers required to have to deal with this issue?

Specific issues:

Language related to biological sex in guidance documents

The RSE code explicitly recognises biological sex and that plays a central role in shaping people's identity. The new RSE guidance makes a number of references to women, a term which was not used at all in the previous guidance – for example, the previous PSE framework guidance, which set out the curriculum expectations for SRE, *did not* make reference to boys or girls, or any gendered term. It is therefore untrue that Welsh Government has removed gendered terms or references from guidance.

NHS Services

Issues about NHS services for learners that identify as Trans are separate from discussions about the Curriculum and so this does not have any bearing on the content of the curriculum. [schools and local authorities will have approaches around these procedures and so it may be more appropriate for them to respond with further detail]

Content

Can you provide further clarification what is meant by sexual and reproductive rights of children according to the new RSE/CSE curriculum guidelines?

- Have you seen the graphic lesson content coming from England & Scotland?

Specific Issues:

Lesson content

Schools are expected to share a summary of the adopted curriculum, including RSE. As stated, the curriculum will be required to teach the RSE Code and this can be read online to get a better sense of what RSE will include.

Over time, schools will also be able to provide examples of lesson plans and resources to support the delivery of the adopted curriculum. The new curriculum has been rolled out from this September so your school may not yet have detailed lesson plans for its adopted RSE curriculum prepared at this stage, particularly if they are intending to teach it later in the year. Schools are at the start of their new RSE curriculum journey and are encouraged to take their time to build their RSE curriculum sensitively and constructively so that RSE is embedded effectively for the long term. This will include making sure lesson plans are developmentally appropriate for their learners.

Welsh Government RSE statutory guidance, which all schools are legally required to consider, emphasises the importance of schools engaging with parents about RSE. Schools are encouraged to communicate proactively with parents and carers on an

ongoing basis. We ask that parents engage schools respectfully and consider carefully what schools are proposing to teach. In turn, if you have particular concerns about specific aspects of a school's proposals, then you should raise these concerns with the school straight away.

We are confident that as schools develop and share their proposals for RSE and have open and respectful conversations with parents, this will help dispel any concerns that you may have.

RSE for Younger Learners

As was the case in the Foundation Phase, our youngest learners will be taught about friendships and families, they will absolutely not be taught about romantic or sexual relationships: this is prohibited by the RSE Code. The law is crystal clear: teaching of RSE must be developmentally appropriate for each and every child.

Resources

Schools are still at an early stage of roll-out and we do not presently recommend specific resources or materials to implement the Code. Welsh Government are encouraging schools to take their time to select resources for RSE. They should not use resources that they do not consider are developmentally appropriate or do not meet the code.

Supported by school improvement services, schools will use resources that are reputable and developmentally appropriate, and they will use these in a way that is sensitive to children's needs. In advance of resources being used in the classroom, we will ask schools to share examples of these with parents.

However, we are aware that campaign groups have been stoking mistrust by saying that resources that are not fit for the classroom are being used by schools. These resources have not been used in Wales. Welsh Government has said that they are not in keeping with the RSE Code and would not be lawful to use in Wales.

Schools must ensure learners are not exposed to learning that is not appropriate for their level of development. This includes considering their age and maturity. It also means that all resources and materials used in schools and settings must be developmentally appropriate to learners, and be part of an objective, pluralistic teaching approach. This is supported by the statutory guidance.

Teacher Training

- Have you collected any data to gauge whether Teachers are generally happy/comfortable and/or feel qualified/ready to teach the new RSE/CSE curriculum?

General Response:

All teachers have the appropriate qualifications and are supported through ongoing professional development.

Specific issue:

Funding for Teacher Training

In conjunction with the schools' improvement services our schools and their staff are undertaking professional learning for designing and delivering the RSE curriculum which is in line with the learning set out in the mandatory RSE Code. The Welsh Government is investing a further £100,000 during 22/23, including co-developing specific support for schools to deliver RSE.

Safeguarding

- What provisions outside of the DBS are in place for vetting of school staff who are required to disseminate RSE/CSE to children?
- Will counselling be available for children & staff dealing with sexual abuse? If so, will this be from internal sources or via the use of external agencies?
- What is the current process that you advise schools should follow for dealing with disclosures of abuse from children to their teachers?
- Can you please outline the training that has been offered to teachers for sexual safeguarding? Does this training include institutional sex abuse?

General Response:

We want education to help our children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready for the next chapter in their life after school. The Curriculum for Wales has started its implementation in all primary schools and some years 7s from September 2022. Relationships and Sexuality education has a key role to play in helping children and young people navigate the world safely.

Parents have a central role to play in supporting their children. There is also a crucial role for schools - especially in a world where there is so much inaccurate and misleading information and harmful materials, circulating online. RSE plays an important role for the safeguarding and protection of all learners in Wales. RSE is a mandatory element of the Curriculum for Wales – so that every child has a right to access the full curriculum. It includes learning on anti-bullying, violence against woman and online safety as part of a whole school approach.

Specific Issues:

Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools

All schools and local authorities take matters of safeguarding and abuse extremely seriously. Local authorities, school governing bodies and head teachers have a duty to exercise their education functions to promote the welfare of pupils. Schools stand in loco parentis whilst they have charge of pupils. That means they must take such care of their child as a responsible parent would.

RSE in the new curriculum plays a key role in keeping children safe and so is an important tool in safeguarding children.

Third party involvement – school support

- Are schools advised to use outside agencies for training and/or helping to deliver the RSE/CSE curriculum? If yes, can you provide a list of the agencies you have recommended?
- What vetting processes are in place or required for sourcing and procuring external agencies, and will parents have a say in what agencies are finally used in this context?
- Are you aware of the British charity and advocacy organisation called Mermaids who have provided agency support to educational institutions in England and Scotland?
- Are you aware of the latest media disclosures that have surfaced regarding Mermaids including Dr Jacob Breslow a Trustee of the organisation who has been linked to Paedophile Support Groups and has since been forced to resign, and also of Mr Darren Mews the Digital Engagement Officer of Mermaids who has posted pornographic content of himself dressing up as a school girl in a provocative manner, and that Mermaids has been found to provide breast binders to pupils without the informed consent of their parents?
- In light of this evolving scandal, can you appreciate why parents in our community are extremely alarmed and anxious regarding the general rollout of RSE/CSE curriculum in its current form, which is cross cutting through all taught subjects, removes their parental and primary legislative right of opting their children out, and the potential use of external organisations which may play a significant role in jeopardising the health and safeguarding of their children?

General Response:

Design of the curriculum and decisions about third party support are taken at school level in terms of the delivery of RSE. Schools are expected to ensure any support, much like any other lesson content, adheres to the legal requirements related to RSE (developmentally appropriate, pluralistic) and the RSE Code (see also **lesson content** earlier in the document).

Schools and local authorities will need to add detail of the engagement they have with third party providers here.

Specific Issues:

Mermaids

Mermaids have not been involved in any development work on the curriculum and have had no part in developing the RSE Code. There is no direct relationship between the Welsh Government and Mermaids in the context of education.